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**HERNANDO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE MISSISSIPPI GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 29, 2018) — In its 33rd year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced Katelyn Cartwright of Hernando High School as its 2017-18 Gatorade Mississippi Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Cartwright is the first Gatorade Mississippi Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Hernando High School.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the racecourse, distinguishes Cartwright as Mississippi's best high school girls cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in January, Cartwright joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Lukas Verzbicas (2010-11, 2009-10 Carl Sandburg, Orland Park, Ill.), Megan Goethals (2009-10, Rochester, Rochester Hills, Mich.), Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Prep., San Luis Obispo, Calif.) and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley, Naperville, Ill.).

The 5-foot-1 junior broke the tape MHSAA 6A State Championships this past season with a time of 19:29.84, leading the Tigers to fourth place as a team. Cartwright also captured victories at the Mississippi College Choctaw Open, the Southerntees Challenge, the Saltillo Invitational and the Hickory Flat Invitational, along with a runner-up finish at the Jesse Owens Classic.

A certified soccer referee and a gymnastics coach at ConXion Hernando, Cartwright has volunteered locally on behalf of the Wesley Meadows Retirement Community, the Karm Shelter, Montgomery Village, Backyard Bible Clubs, the Make-A-Wish Foundation and the Knoxville Boys & Girls Club. Also the vice president of her school's student council, she is a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and Hobby Leadership, in addition to serving as a Youth Leader and Choir Director at the McIvor Missionary Baptist Church. "Katelyn demonstrated impressive growth and maturity from last season, improving on a 17th-place finish at the state final as a sophomore to capture her first championship," said Erik Boal, editor of DyeStat.com. "She also helped the Tigers take a big step forward as a team, finishing fourth after 10th-place finishes the previous two seasons. Katelyn's tenacity facing a demanding regular-season schedule paid dividends in her preparation for the state final, where she won by more than 10 seconds."

Cartwright has maintained a weighted 4.31 GPA in the classroom. She will begin her senior year of high school this fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states that sanction high school football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, baseball, softball, and boys and girls track & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Cartwright joins Gatorade Mississippi Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Kate Mattox (2016-17, 2015-16, 2014-15, & 2013-14, Starkville High School), Regen McGee (2012-13, Pass Christian High School), Christina Daniels (2011-12, Tupelo High School), Elisabeth Gaillet (2010-11, St. Andrew's Episcopal School), and Cory McGee (2009-10, 2008-09 & 2007-08, Pass Christian High School) as athletes who have won the cross-country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, Cartwright will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants - one for each sport - will be announced throughout the year.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow the conversation on Twitter #GatoradePOY. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit <http://playeroftheyear.gatorade.com/>.

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